

The unanimous support for H. Res. 996, *Expressing support for the designation of September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month*,

illustrates not only the significance of the issue, but our commitment as Members of Congress and as a nation to improving the health of our children and youth. Obesity is an ongoing struggle that leads to disease, poor physical condition, mental health issues, and an overall lower quality of life. Fortunately, we are well-equipped to meet this challenge through education, better nutrition, and increased physical activity.

First Lady Michelle Obama has jump-started a program to do just that, known as the “Let’s Move!” campaign. Let’s Move! highlights the importance of healthy eating habits and encourages our nation’s children to lead active, healthier lives and maintain a healthy weight. The recognition of September as National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month is another step in the right direction, but there is still much more that we can do to combat this growing epidemic.

Since 1970, the number of obese children in the United States has increased by 400 percent. Furthermore, it has been estimated that childhood obesity costs the nation \$14 billion in preventable medical expenses, indirect costs, and productivity loss each year. As astounding as these numbers are, so, too, is my commitment to a healthier America. Through smart health care policy and education, we can empower individuals and families to live active, healthier lifestyles, improve our nation’s standard of health, and reduce the strain on our medical system.

On July 21, I authored a letter to First Lady Obama and had 34 of my fellow Members of Congress join me in encouraging her to include appropriate information regarding eating disorders in the Let’s Move! campaign. **(Please find below and attached a copy of the letter.)**

Like obesity, eating disorders afflict children of different ages, genders, economic back-grounds, and ethnicities. Unhealthy weight loss measures, anorexia nervosa, binge eating, and eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) have increased significantly over the past few decades. In fact, more than 11 million men, women, and children suffer from an eating disorder in the United States. We need comprehensive and well-coordinated interventions that support healthier habits and environments.

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month is an excellent opportunity to start making a difference in the lives of this and future generations of young Americans. I stand committed to supporting initiatives, like the Let’s Move! campaign, and policies that improve our nation’s health.

July 21, 2010

Mrs. Michelle Obama  
First Lady of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mrs. Obama:

Thank you for championing the health and welfare of our nation's children through Let's Move. Let's Move has brought historic attention to the importance of addressing one the most serious public health concerns of today. Although we applaud that you mentioned eating disorders during a recent Let's Move event, we believe that broadening Let's Move's focus to include information about eating disorders would enhance the campaign's mission to improve the mental and physical health of all children.

We understand that obesity and eating disorders have distinct health impacts, and believe that the prevalence of these disorders indicates the need for comprehensive and well-coordinated interventions that support healthier habits and environments. Like obesity, unhealthy weight loss measures, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating and eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) have increased significantly over the past few decades. In fact, more than 11 million men, women and children suffer from an eating disorder in the United States.

In a speech that publicly introduced Let's Move, you stated that unhealthy diets and habits can negatively influence physical, emotional and educational development and well-being. Eating disorders are no exception. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that undernourishment impacts a student's ability to excel academically, and suicide, anxiety and depression are more common in people with eating disorders. Eating disorders also have the

highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses, and can result in long-term health issues including heart and kidney failure, cognitive impairment, muscle atrophy and sudden death.

Like obesity, eating disorders afflict children of different ages, genders, economic backgrounds, and ethnicities. At least 30-40 percent of junior high students have reported dieting, over half of high-school girls have reported dieting, and 25 percent of bulimia and anorexia cases are men. What's more, student athletes can be especially vulnerable to eating disorders because some adopt unhealthy dietary restrictions and weight loss methods to achieve or maintain a certain weight for competition. Many obese individuals resort to unhealthy weight loss tactics and may develop eating disorders in an attempt to achieve a desired weight or body image.

Strong environmental, cultural, social factors have contributed to the high rates of obesity and eating disorders in the United States. Stigma, blame and misinformation often accompany these conditions. Coordinated efforts among educators, elected officials, parents, community leaders and young people are crucial to executing sustainable solutions to these public health problems. We believe that Let's Move's mission is compatible with messages and interventions that are designed to address eating disorders.

Educators could incorporate information about unhealthy dieting when providing information about healthy food choices. Speeches and parental toolkits could include information about risks, signs and support networks for eating disorders. Let's Move programs could be designed to teach children to respect body size diversity, promote self esteem, and support body satisfaction. And, the Let's Move Web site could include a link to the Office of Women's Health Web site which has comprehensive and evidence based information on eating disorders.

The unprecedented leadership in the battle against obesity through Let's Move shows your commitment to creatively and aggressively improving the health of children, families and communities. We hope that you will take our suggestions into consideration so that Let's Move can take a more holistic approach to addressing the full spectrum of behaviors that are compromising the health of America's children.

Sincerely,

Alcee L. Hastings

Member of Congress

Michael A. Arcuri  
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Donna M. Christensen  
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Kennedy  
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress

Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Charles K. Djou  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Trent Franks  
Member of Congress

Paul W. Hodes  
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Dale E. Kildee  
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Jim Langevin  
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Carolyn B. Maloney  
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Theodore E. Deutch  
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Donna F. Edwards  
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Barney Frank  
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Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Tim Holden  
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Carolyn C. Kilpatrick  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
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Kendrick B. Meek  
Member of Congress

Sue Myrick  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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David Price  
Member of Congress

Allyson Y. Schwartz

Member of Congress

Edolphus "Ed" Towns  
Member of Congress

Diane E. Watson  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

David P. Roe  
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

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 [Eating Disorder Prevention Letter to the First Lady 7 21 2010.pdf](#)